VI

AMERICAN POLICY

HAS there been supplied from the United States any great formative force in the development of Latin America? The answer is undoubtedly affirmative, but our influence has been exerted largely without contact, and for the most part unconsciously, like a fact of geography. There is a degree of similarity in our own relationship to the sea power of Great Britain. Very few Americans understand how much of our freedom for development was conferred by the British navy, and how impossible would have been our policy of isolation without British friendship. In the same fashion, but more definitely, we gave protection to Latin America during a period when it must have been overwhelmed by the aggressively expanding nations of Europe.

But American influence has had another side. The nation which supplied a political model and accorded protection also fought the Mexican War. Hence protection against outside nations, but not against ourselves, has been the universal acceptance of the Monroe Doctrine among Latin Americans; and if their countries must become colonies, they are unable to prefer us to Europe. The menace of American aggression—the "phantasm" of the Mexicans—has supplied the atmosphere of suspicion and distrust in which professions of friendship are even less convincing than the pretenses of European diplomacy. Is there ground for this fear? Our history shows that we

have never hesitated to act as we chose toward such Latin American states as have come in our way, and we possess all the power necessary. For some, therefore, it appeared that the Monroe Doctrine merely barred the door of the ogre's house to prevent interference with the meal. That personage may affirm friendship, and even weep, but may eat all the same!

The above is a fair description of Latin American feeling. Is it justified? Of course it is—partially. It fails to understand how much of our tradition and political conception forbids brutal conquest, but it realizes that we are a missionary nation capable of using bayonets to enforce the right, and that we might decide what is right without careful consideration. Intervention is somehow implicit in the Monroe Doctrine. These matters remained in the background for three quarters of a century; they are now acutely foremost. Things cannot continue as before, because separation has been bridged by a multitude of contacts. We, just as little as our neighbors, can afford to be at the mercy of a program of vague and dangerous possibilities, called out by the moment's feeling. We need to know what we are going to do; moreover, we need to know it at this precise stage in the rearrangement of international relations.

In all probability the course of action pursued in the immediate future will fix our relationships with the Latin American republics for several decades to come. To set this course wisely is the more difficult because there has been, since the beginning of our Caribbean action, a series of confused gropings rather than a comprehensive, definitive, and far-reaching policy. In other words, we have not yet decided upon objectives nor have we thought about means. Unless clarity and continuity can now dominate

our action, we may be led into blunders that will entail the most serious consequences. Such a policy must lead rather than follow the demands of public opinion. The mass of Americans can be counted upon to back the fair and decent action, especially if it is conducive to the best interests of all concerned. But public opinion can be stampeded in almost any direction selected by propagandists. Plans and actions are responsible to their ultimate results rather than to any momentary demand. In the past the tendency has been to play upon a single note with little regard to the whole composition. Conditions of recognition, intervention to protect American lives, the Platt Amendment, and most interpretations of the Monroe Doctrine are partial, subsidiary, and unorganized elements of policy. Nor can expediency be a safe guide. We can only with difficulty take a separate line of action with the different republics, especially of the northern group, for there is a reactive solidarity in all Latin America that cannot be disregarded. What we do in Mexico is eagerly watched in all other republics, because of the belief that this action will finally be extended to them. When our marines are landed in any small Caribbean state, there should be some intention governing this action, and some foresight of final results.

A definite policy in the future must be rooted in the relationships of the past. For several decades the theory and the practice of the Monroe Doctrine coincided, and this was because the theory of our relationship to the Latin American states was supported by conditions in the development of this country which kept us from any line of continuous external action. The time was certain to arrive when it would be necessary to define in detail this blanket doctrine, and at this point it was equally certain that the realities underlying the theory would emerge and determine

action. Until twenty years ago, therefore, our isolation and economic self-sufficiency, combined with the fact of racial and cultural difference, preserved within the Monroe Doctrine the fiction that these were completely independent states which we were merely protecting against European aggression. But the real conception of the relationship that is common to all Americans, and on which all would be prepared to take action, is that here is a family of republics of which we are the first and most authoritative member. We are not unconscious that in providing immunity from European aggression we are assuming responsibility, but not until recently did any cause arise to stimulate this responsibility into action. But the background of feeling must not be underestimated. We would consider it an outrage if a European country should intervene in a Latin American republic, but we should consider ourselves completely justified in undertaking such intervention if we conceived it to be necessary. Again, we are prepared to encroach upon its sovereign action if any one of these states should attempt a foreign alliance prejudicial to our national interests.

An important distinction must be drawn between the more advanced South American states and those that remain backward. Argentina, Brazil, and Chile developed statehood, though still somewhat unstable, under the old Monroe Doctrine. Relations with these republics must therefore go into a special category. It may be that if time had been allowed, all of the other states could have grown into political security in the same manner, but circumstances have changed in a way to make this impossible.

With reference to these larger states it must, however, be borne in mind that complete independence is not possible. With Argentina, for example, ever since the semi-

constitutional working of her government has justified immunity from political interference, there has remained, without greatly diminishing, an economic dependence upon Europe. And this could conceivedly act reflexly upon political arrangements. Circumstances might arise which could result in hostility to the United States in that part of America. It may be asked, what difference can this make to us? The answer is that we cannot be indifferent to the attitude of any one of those countries, because they are solidly connected with other sections of Latin America, with which we have vital concern. Furthermore, despite the emphasis laid by writers upon differences of race, language, and tradition, and upon present commercial affiliations, there is an element of unity which overshadows all these differences. Those countries are part of a certain geographical area which will be still more closely associated with us, with the further development of trade and transportation. Again, there is an important identity of tradition. The inhabitants of those republics are conscious of their membership in a system which severed its connection with Europe, and proceeded to the conquest of a new continent, which is therefore liberty-loving and forward-looking. It is easy for individuals to establish European relationships, but the people as a whole and in their organized capacity look to the United States politically, socially, and economically as their model and example.

This circumstance provides a broad and completely sound basis on which a close and mutually advantageous connection can be built. A diplomatic representative of high standing, with a mastery of the Spanish language, and playing a part socially and intellectually similar to that of our representative in London, could in a period of a few years establish bonds between the two countries that

would be proof against any foreign action. This is assuming that commercial intercourse will develop at the same time. To put it bluntly, there is every reason for the United States to hold a position of influence based on mutual interests and free from all distrust. The same piece of work would be more difficult in Chile and much easier in Brazil.

But with other states, those bordering on the gulf and the Caribbean, the problem is different and other methods are required. The reasons of course lie in our history,—in the necessity for protecting the mouth of the Mississippi, the possession of the Canal, and our naval occupation of Caribbean waters. Added to these is our predominant commercial interest, which of itself was certain in the long run to bring about a re-definition of policy. With these states, with the exception of Mexico, we are in fact exercising a protectorate in the ordinary sense of the term. We are, without protest from other nations, interfering to maintain order and to prevent war. Our marines are ordered ashore with audacious promptitude and with little objection from any important body of public opinion in this country.

It is most important to put fact and fiction in their proper place in our future policy. Otherwise measures that seem at the moment justified and expedient may prove serious blunders. First of all, it is a fiction that any of the states of Central America and in the Caribbean, and, presently, the northern tier on the South American continent, are free and independent states whose mode of conducting their domestic affairs is indifferent to the people and government of the United States. If this is true, it is a mistake of policy to give them normally the scope and power of independent states and intermittently attempt to deter-

mine their action. This method inevitably leads to bullying and to all the harsh feeling that comes when we seemingly meddle with other people's business. The important thing is to make the meddling so continuous and so beneficial that it will gain the acceptance of a fixed institution. Can this be done in a way consistent with respect for sovereignty?

If the present methods, unorganized by policy, are pursued much longer, we shall probably find ourselves facing the necessity in some of these states of administering their affairs. This would be unfortunate. While there is no discounting the administrative work done by Americans under temporary occupations, especially that accomplished in Cuba, at the same time we are not fitted to undertake in a large way the administration of dependencies. American political theory is inimical to it, and we are deficient in trained personnel. That temporary occupation and administration of government provide an apprenticeship in self-government, is an illusion. It has not so issued in Cuba, and it is to be hoped that this government will not commit the stupid blunder of conferring self-government on the Philippines. Not until we are free from school-boy notions about the magical absorption of our political conceptions by backward races, can we enter the field of administration of dependencies.

What then can be done? Any one well acquainted with Mexico or Cuba must be aware of the position of extraordinary power and influence held by the diplomatic representative of the United States. There were critical points in Mexican affairs when an American ambassador might have dominated the whole situation and have done much to avert the troubles of the past ten years. This would have required a man with a grasp of the great factors, and

without prejudices that would prevent his playing an effective part. The recent difficulties in Cuba had their dress rehearsal in 1916, when the Constitution was set aside and the existing administration used its power to defeat the elections and continue itself in office. That was the moment for our State Department, even though we were on the verge of war with Germany, to step in and fulfil the whole purpose of America in Cuba,—that of insuring the working of constitutional government. Those who were to blame for Cuba's political troubles are not all Cubans. While there have been some notable exceptions among American representatives in Latin American countries, the general rule has shown a most unfortunate selection. In any of these capitals lies one of the heaviest tasks in the whole range of diplomatic activity. We are concerned with real and long-continuing relationships. Men are too frequently selected for these posts to satisfy claims for political service, and the Latin American posts occupy the lower end of the honor roll.

The first condition, then, of carrying out a long-distance policy with this group of states is to select men of the highest attainments and of proved administrative skill. Although acting as diplomatic agent, the real function of such a representative will be that of adviser to the government. This would leave the conduct of affairs to the native administration, but would bring American influence to bear forcefully and skilfully and continuously upon that conduct of affairs. A clear policy established by the State Department would guide the representative's actions. He would necessarily have a close acquaintance with the history and people of the country. But this would not be sufficient. He would require a staff of expert assistants who would make it their business to keep him fully in-

formed as to social, economic, and political conditions. Certain general rules or fixed elements of policy would guide all representatives. These would contemplate removal of the present political maladjustments. First of all, American influence should be continuously used to enforce respect for the Constitution. The rules of the game are repeatedly set aside in these countries which are far from being deficient in political and legal knowledge and skill. The umpire of the game, the Supreme Court, has no final authority or power to enforce decisions. Our government has already established a precedent in the Platt Amendment. This principle could be extended to the other states and give this country enormous power toward establishing stable government. Again, our representatives, working with this conception of policy, should labor to strip the presidency in each of these states of its dictatorial power. This cannot exist with true observance of the Constitution. Once the legislature and the Supreme Court are established in their true positions, and fiscal control is taken out of the President's hands, his arbitrary power comes to an end. We should understand once for all that we cannot end revolutions by merely forbidding them. Revolutions are incidental to a system which constitutes a vicious circle. This can be stopped not by intermittent outside action on our part, but by continuous internal action. Behind all of these modes of influence must stand the indubitable authority and strength of the United States. But even the landing of marines should have its place in policy and be the instrument of civil purpose. It does more harm than good to hand control over to a military officer whose methods and objects can hardly be identical with those of the enlightened permanent representative of our government. There is another matter of the first im-

portance,—our policy in Latin American countries must be disentangled from the pressure of economic interests. It is disgraceful that in the past, diplomatic representations have so often supervened upon the clamor of groups of persons with property interests in Latin American countries. This is not asserting that it is not the duty of our government to protect the lives and property of our citizens, but this protection must go on all the time and not await the moment when, to all appearances, action has been precipitated by propaganda. The loss of life is, of course, intentionally played up by those who are interested in protecting and extending the scope of their economic benefits. The foreign offices throughout Latin America know precisely what is being done. They are well acquainted with the press-agent methods of securing action by the State Department. The consequence is a universal belief that we are using our national strength for the purpose of securing more favorable treatment of our investors. This is of course only partially true. The important point is that it gives a rating to our policy. The organized interests should be given to understand that their methods of raising an outcry can only hinder the department in doing its duty. The matter can be carried still further. It is a mistake to use diplomatic pressure in the support of interests which in those countries are universally adjudged unfair. In all right economic enterprises in a foreign country, there is something of mutual benefit. It is difficult to imagine Great Britain having constantly to put diplomatic strength behind the multitude of British interests in Argentina. Stated bluntly, we are not called upon to forward the projects of our citizens in foreign countries "to hog it." Real protection is of another kind. It insures fair and equal treatment. It endeavors to maintain stable

political conditions, and insists that change of conditions shall not work injury to our investors, in exactly the same manner as our laws at home protect against damage.

The only special case among the northern group of Latin American republics is that of Mexico. The distinction is one due to size and consequent importance. In one sense this case determines our policy with reference to the other states. We could, after some practice, administer directly the affairs of the smaller countries. This is impossible with Mexico. Any belief we may have that occupation would bring order out of chaos for more than the time being is the greatest of delusions. The difficulties are beyond the conception of any one who knows Mexico only from the outside. It is to the interest of all concerned that Mexicans should carry on their own government. It is our concern that this government should be stable, that its operations should meet average standards of political morality, and that we should be able to do business with Mexicans under fair and safe conditions. But we cannot make the Mexican government stable by demanding that it be so; we cannot sweep aside the political habits and methods of thinking of four centuries by writing truculent notes or issuing strong opinions formed by ignorant and prejudiced commissions. In other words, we must understand that we possess no magical method bringing about orderly conditions. This can be done only by painstaking and constant work on the spot. If possible, we should free the Mexican mind from the "phantasm"—the belief that we mean to take possession of their country—and substitute for it a confidence in our wish and ability to help them solve their problem. With the perpetual threat of intervention we are playing out our trump-card without result. Whenever a show of force is made, it should be

without proclamation. No conviction is carried through mere advertising. And as intervention is a last resource and a type of adventure upon which we naturally hesitate to embark, we should place it completely in the background and develop other methods of diplomatic pressure. It is a mistake not to have in Mexico City during a disturbed period the most skilful representative we can place there,—even if formality forbids our accrediting an ambassador to a government that we do not recognize. In other words, our course should be shaped by the realities and not by the fiction. As to recognition, we only destroy our influence by drawing up a petty list of conditions. What we demand of the Mexican government is that it be stable, responsible, and fair in its treatment of foreigners. These are conditions of fact and not of promises. We form our judgment as to whether a government deserves our recognition. We do not permit that government to negotiate for recognition.

All the foregoing concerning Mexico is based upon the assumption, which is adequately grounded in all the circumstances, that Mexico, like the other Latin American states of the northern group, stands in a special relationship to the United States. This relationship flows from our overwhelmingly predominant interest, strategic and economic. It is a relationship which limits Mexico's freedom of association with the other states. It is one which contemplates the inevitable high degree of economic unity of the two countries. In other words, Mexico is in fact a protected state with whose domestic affairs we must of necessity concern ourselves.

It would be of the greatest advantage if Congress could understand the importance of providing adequate representation in the Latin American countries. We cannot do the work which the Monroe Doctrine now demands from

us with the low grade of ability at present used, with the short, overworked, unskilful staffs on which ministers must depend, and with the poverty-stricken, undignified housing of our representatives. The carrying out of this policy successfully will cost money, but it will be repaid a thousandfold in the benefits of closer association and the saving of loss through disturbed conditions. And it is true that disturbed conditions will continue in some of these republics for decades, unless we take firm hold in the near future.

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